

To avert such a consummation, to secure for Milwaukee her own back country—to turn the railroad chaos into a cosmos—one whole consolidated of parts harmonious and helpful, was the high aim of Mr. Mitchell. For this end he obtained the mastery of a nucleus which developed into the St. Paul road, and added to it the Watertown and Horicon, which he already controlled. By this movement nearly the whole business of these lines was brought into Milwaukee, instead of being diverted, as before, at Milton and Minnesota Junction. Next, securing the Prairie du Chien and McGregor Western, he extended that line northward in 1867 to St. Paul and Minneapolis. He thus made the name of his road, the St. Paul, no longer a misnomer, and completed the first bond of iron connecting the twin cities of the northwest with Milwaukee and Chicago. His consolidation of Wisconsin roads and concentration of them in Milwaukee, he was on the point of supplementing by the purchase of the line from Milwaukee to Chicago. This purpose being thwarted by eastern directors, the connections of his system with Chicago were at the mercy of a rival company. Hence he was forced to construct a line of his own by an inferior route from Milwaukee to that metropolis. Had his advice been taken on another occasion, his road would many years ago have penetrated through the lumber belt of Wisconsin to Lake Superior, and would have been enriched by a land-grant in that direction.

From the Chicago base, by purchase and construction, he extended his line west to Omaha, southwest to Kansas City, as well as to Missouri river points northward. Buying the river road up from La Crosse he completed the best avenue, and that with many branches, to the great cities of the north. Pushing westward from Milwaukee into Dakota, he laid a thousand miles of track in that territory largely in advance of settlement—but still more largely promotive of it. He foresaw the infinite capabilities of that region so clearly that he could not help acting on his convictions.

The road of which he became president and all those it successively absorbed, had before been failures,—their notes gone to protest, their floating debts unmanageable.